

Remarks

Claims 1-25 and 32-33 are currently pending in the patent application: claims 1-21 are allowed, and Applicant hereby requests cancellation of claims 32-33. For the reasons and arguments set forth below, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 22-25 are allowable over the cited references.

Apart from claims 1-25 and 32-33, the non-final Office Action dated October 12, 2006 indicated that claims 22 and 25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over Mao *et al.* (U.S. 2003/0039750) or alternatively over Serp *et al.* article; claims 23-24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Mao in view of Dai *et al.* (U.S. 2001/0019238; *now* U.S. 6,900,580) or in view of Serp; claims 22-23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Shiota (U.S. Patent No. 6,797,184); claims 22-23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Tsao (U.S. Patent No. 4,513,098); and claims 22-23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over van Montfoort *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 4,111,842) with Shiota or Tsao.

Applicant respectfully traverses the Section 102 and Section 103 rejections of claims 22, 23, 24 and 25. As claimed, the invention requires immersion in an acidic aqueous solution. It is clear that Mao teaches the opposite; *i.e.*, use of an alkaline solution. With respect to those rejections which would not or do not rely on this teaching of Mao (e.g., van Montfoort, Shiota or Tsao), Applicant submits that there is no correspondence to Applicant's invention (e.g., for the reasons discussed above in connection with the Mao reference) and no evidence of motivation to combine.

In view of the above discussion, Applicant believes that each of the rejections has been overcome and the application is in condition for allowance. A favorable response is requested. Should there be any remaining issues that could be readily addressed over the telephone, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned at (651) 686-6633.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: November 10, 2006